

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 23 No. 12

December 15, 1955

Whole No. 273



Santa Claus, or St. Nicholas, in the act of descending a chimney on Christmas eve.

The cover picture is taken from the Special Annual Pictorial Edition of Brother Jonathan for January 1, 1845. Brother Jonathan was a mammoth weekly news-story paper measuring 22x32". One needed to use the livingroom floor to spread it out for reading, either that or a pair of mighty long arms. The contents of this particular issue are devoted to Christmas and New Years and includes the poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas" originally published in 1822. Other items of interest are "The Customs of our Forefathers"; "The Regrets of Approaching Old Age"; "Rambles Around New York" illustrated; and an editorial wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Rival Rangers of Fleet Street

By A. W. Lawson

Recently, in discussing old boys papers with brother collectors, reference was made to the rivalry that existed between the two leading publishers of English Boys Story papers about ninety years ago, and it might be of interest to recall the state of uncivil warfare which raged between these two publishers in their squabbles, as to which of them would get most of the young peoples' pennies.

In and about the year 1860 there were very few papers published specially for young folk, and these, although good enough in a mild way would not quite satisfy the literary appetites of the ordinary boy. But for those who wanted something of a more robust character there was a flood of what might justly be termed "pernicious literature" in the shape of weekly issues of interminable ro-

mances of every sensational type, dealing with the exploits of Highwaymen, pirates, smugglers, robbers, etc., and to such an extent did the trade in them grow, that public alarm was excited (somewhat as it is today being roused by the Crime Comics) and the police had to intervene in a number of cases to seize the publishers stocks.

Amongst the purveyors of this sweet poison for youths were Edwin J. Brett and William L. Emmett, both probably worthy men according to their own lights, but perhaps deficient in a saving sense of humor, seeing that while they were providing sensational reading for the boys, they were at the same time, running the English Girls' Journal—a very milk and water affair indeed. It had not a very long run, and one result was a

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Edited by

Edward T. LeBlanc, 36 Taylor St., Fall River, Mass.

Assistant Editor

Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass.

Asst. Ed. Photography—Charles Duprez, 228 Larch Lane, Smithtown, L.I., N.Y.

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falling out between the two Partners, which was never healed.

Edwin J. Brett had his ears open to the weather forecast at this time, and seeing that it was time to get going while the going was good, decided to strike out on his own account, and so, on borrowed capital of £300, he founded, in 1866, a new style of Boys Story paper which he named *The Boys of England*. It was an instantaneous success, and as the saying goes "he never looked back." However, there was the usual snag, for when the new paper was about half a year old, up pops his old colleague, Mr. Emmett, with a good imitation of his paper, this new paper being entitled "*The Young Englishman's Journal*."

Mr. Brett resisted this intrusion on what he had come to consider as his own domain. And so he made the next move by starting a paper for young men entitled "*Young Men of Great Britain*". This also was a success, and then Mr. Emmett came along with another new Journal "*The Young Gentlemen of Britain*" which surpassed in quality and appearance any of the other journals. Good as it was it proved a miss-fire, chiefly owing to the badly chosen title, which did not appeal to the ordinary working man, and after the third volume it became incorporated with a new journal of Emmett's entitled "*The Young Briton*". Brett in the meantime had started two new papers, the "*Boys of the World*" and the "*Boys Favourite*", (which had not long runs), apparently with the intent of harassing his competitor, as may be apparent from his next move.

In 1872 Emmett started a new paper which he called "*The Rovers Log*" and Brett who had previously got wind of the project, published on the same day, a paper bearing the name of "*Rovers of the Sea*" with the expected result that both papers foundered after about a twelve months' voyage. By this time Emmett had got into financial difficulties, which did not excite any feelings of compassion in Mr. Brett's bosom, as, adding in-

sult to injury, he spoke most disparagingly of Mr. Emmett's efforts in the Editor's column of his papers. This exasperated Mr. Emmett to such an extent that he held forth in his "letter box" on the pretensions of Mr. Brett to the position of "moral guide" for the youth in the following strain: "This great moral teacher, for such he would now style himself, made his debut in the publishing world as part proprietor of a pirate penny romance—and that he directed, invented and published penny romances of the *Boy Burglar*, *Highwayman* and *Jack Shepard School*; but we denounce the contemptible hypocrisy of this man who follows up by saying "that a great deal has been said of late about the pernicious literature of the day, I with others have watched the career of the pernicious works contaminating the minds of the readers." These are the words of the man who has actually fattened on the literature he now denounces. He has indeed watched the career of these contaminating works—watched them with an eye to profit, and a tender care for the dirty gold which is made from these publications." This is only a mild specimen of the ink of missiles which were slung at one another by these caterers for youthful edification.

After this there was a lull as Emmett was busy with a new venture entitled "*The Song of Britannia*" (he had handed over the "*Young Briton*" to his Brother George previously) and nothing happened of any consequence until the clash came over the *Harkaway* stories, but this has already been dealt with ending in a draw.

Although the Emmett Journals were more attractive in many ways than Bretts, the proprietors lacked business ability, and while Brett thrived steadily, the Emmetts lost ground, until about ten years after their start, the last of their papers ceased publication—their end being hastened by a new rival in the field in the shape of a new paper called "*The Boys Standard*" which was published by Charles Fox.

Mr. Brett to the end adhered to the respectable course he had mapped out for himself, and his role of the "Industrious Apprentice" paid him well as he was a very wealthy man when he died in 1895.

But even before he went there was a sign of changes in the taste of the new generation—the snippet journals had arrived as well as the forerunners of the modern comic strips and the young readers did not want a journal full of serials when they were able to purchase a full length Wild West Novel for two pence. The days of the six month serials were finished, and Jack Harkaway, which ran for 13 years, was quite out of the running. The Steersman was missed, and so, the Brett journals languished, although still keeping up their attractive appearance, but gradually calling in their outposts, The Boys Comic Journal, the Boys of the Empire and incorporating them with the Boys of England, until there were none left but the last named. And then the time came when it was thought a new title would be an improvement and the name was changed to "Up to Date Boys" but even that venture lasted but two years, then followed a new series of "Boys of the Empire"—a re-hash of the older journals which lasted about five years. After this came a ghastly attempt to resuscitate the "Boys of England" on almost the fortieth anniversary of its founding in 1866, but it too proved a speedy failure. After a few more feeble attempts to carry on by his Son, it was realized the time had come to accept the situation, and so the door was closed and the shutter put up on Harkaway House.

DISPLAYING DIME NOVELS

By Howard Silsbee

Always, a display of old Dime Novels in libraries, schools, museums, bank windows, or what have you, attracts much attention and interest. But most collectors hesitate to dis-

play any part of their collection publicly because of fear that the fragile booklets might be harmed. There is little chance of this happening if a trained person has charge of setting up the exhibit or if the owner will set it up himself with care.

Points to remember in Dime Novel displaying are that they should always be exhibited under glass and never allowed to be handled. Preferably, they should be shown in a flat case. Assemble your most colorful items with a sense of color contrast. Have a background easy on the eyes—light blue or green for example. Place in the center the most attractive item. Have some items open to interesting features. Arrange chronologically with little cards of typed explanation under each item. Have a large placard over the whole exhibition with an eye-catching topic such as "Do You Remember?" Arrange Dime Novels in any way attractive to the eye. They do not have to be symmetrical. The center item might have a further background paper of different color than the general background. Limit display in time to two or at most three weeks. Try to get local publicity.

If a vertical or wall case has to be used the same general rules hold as for the flat case except that there are little metal or plastic hangers which pin on the wall and lightly clip the item to hold it up. Thumb tacks can be used to hold the Dime Novel but just put them on the corners beside the paper so as to hold it without piercing it.

The more we display our collections, or items from them; the more we give talks on our hobby; the more collectors will result, and that in one way or another will benefit us all. We should learn to share our "Happy Hours" with many more persons than we do.

The January issue of the Round-up will contain Part II of Mr. Leithead's current series entitled The James Boys in the Saddle Again.

DIME NOVELS VERSUS MODERN FICTION

By Charlie Duprez

By the above title I'm taking in also these so-called comic books and True Detective magazines. In so far as the comic books of today, sold by the millions to the new generation, for the life of me I can not see where there is any comparison as to their entertainment we as Kids had with our novels. The youngsters of today not having lived in our day of course cannot share our viewpoint. At least in our novels we had a story and visualized the characters as real human beings. Sure we had comics years ago, Happy Hooligan, The Katzenjammer Kids, The Hall Room Boys, and many others that to my feeble mind had real good stuff. A few today like Bringing Up Father, there at least was some real good humor.

Well anyway lets get to the true Detective tales. Most of them carry interesting stories, which go further into actual cases of which we read in the daily tabloids. However some of them go into extremes with their lurid covers, far worse than the Govt. would not allow going through the mails, ala the Jesse James Stories, of a past era.

Recently with plenty time on my hands I bought quite a few and especially the ones containing photos posed for by models—what a bunch of trash that is. Some of them so disgusted me, and my being far from being an Angel just had to toss into the garbage can where they belonged.

The pocket book size fiction novels sold to anyone, of all the sexy garbage I ever read they took the cake. As an example, in all our novels never was there any profanity such as one can find today, and its just that which human nature seems to go for. This also applies to the many plays which have a tremendous success, mostly due to making things as they are. No doubt our fictional heroes in dime novels did their share of cussing, but it was never set into print. So where are we headed?

At least over the radio and television while they go into gangsterism and blood shed giving youngsters swell ideas for mayhem, if any profanity happens to get in, tis quickly shut off. There was one pocket size novel written by a well known reporter, now deceased, called Washington Confidential. I used to cover assignments in my newspaper work years ago to Washington. I always came back sort of proud of my country, but reading this book and what this writer tells, it was so rotten I threw that out. Little did the reporter or the publisher care what harm it did to the juvenile mind, they had their profit and that is all that interested them. Reading this book it was quite apparent that all the writer was interested in was to dig up all the dirt he could, and he did. So is that anything to arouse the old American patriotism?

So possibly you fellers may go along with me in this opinion, anyway had to get it off my chest. The world of today as I see it with the ever increasing juvenile delinquency which was only in small doses in our day, all I can add is, if it finally gets completely the upper hand, what will our beloved U. S. come to? My final gripe is these Communists who shelter behind the 5th Amendment. Don't those numb skulls ever realize that if Russia ever starts tossing bombs below on our cities, will they give a hoot who is below, be they real Americans or Commies.

FOR SALE— Pluck and Luck Nos. 286 490 616 \$1 each. Beadles Dime Libry. Nos. 243 58 52 \$1 each. Beadles Boys Library Nos. 151 31 14 161 160 12 \$1.50 each. Beadles ½ Dime Library No. 770 \$1. Nugget Library No. 83 \$1.25. Old Cap Collier Library No. 816 \$.50. Brave and Bold No. 426 \$.75. Diamond Dick No. 610 \$1 213 1.25. Western Weekly No. 73 .35. New York Detective Library No. 292 \$2. Buffalo Bill Stories No. 489 .75. Old Sleuth Library No. 101 .75. These novels are guaranteed satisfactory, or money refunded. Roy E. Morris, 901 E. Michigan Ave., Orlando, Fla.

The following poem was started as a lark by Mr. H. Dewey Miller and grew to the proportions exhibited below. Anyone wishing to contribute a stanza is welcome and their efforts will be published in later issues of the Round-Up. Mr. Miller is the son of the late Broncho Charlie Miller, the last of the Pony Express Riders, and became a member of the Happy Hour Brotherhood last August.

OLD DIME NOVELS

(To be sung to the tune of "Oh Suzannah")

1. There's a Brotherhood of Gentlemen in this nation grand
Who pursue a unique hobby—they're in it hand in hand.
Old Dime Novels they collect by wagon loads galore,
And when they have an attic full they search around for more.
Chor. Old Dime Novels: Please find one for me.
And I'll thank you very kindly Sir, from my bended knee.
—H. Dewey Miller
2. The members of this brotherhood go prowling here and there
In attics, barns, and cellars to seek dime novels rare.
They'd rather find some Tip Tops, some Snaps, or Brave & Bold
Than any mine of silver, uranium, or gold.
Chor. Old Dime Novels, whether near or far,
I'll hunt until I find them, no matter where they are!
—J. P. Guinon
3. These Happy Hour members write and trade to beat the band.
They have a little paper, the finest in the land;
Oh! they love their boyhood novels that are getting very rare,
And remember with a chuckle, how they hid 'em 'neath the stair!
Chor. Old Dime Novels, good enough for me!
I wish I had another stack, or even two or three!
—Ken. Daggett
4. When we were kids back on the farm, or hanging around the street,
Hair-raising tales of Merriwell provided us a treat.
We thrilled and chilled when reading of the tomahawk and knife—
Those happy mem'ries linger on, we'll cherish them thru life.
Chor. Old Dime Novels, you may be patched and torn,
But you bring to us a vision of the golden years now gone.
—Geo. French
5. Oh! The stuff that's written nowadays is mostly poor, indeed,
The comic books and magazines are seldom fit to read.
The two-bit trash appeals to one who has a weakened mind—
I'd take an old dime novel over all of these combined.
Chor. Old Dime Novels—you're still the tops for me,
As you've been for many others for about a century.
R. McDowell

EXCHANGE COLUMN

Will pay a reasonable price for the following issues of Adventure Magazine: November and December 1910, January, February and August 1911, Edward W. Hartung, 630 W. Upsal St., Philadelphia 19, Pa.

Wanted—Tip Top #27, 32, 37.
Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass.

MERRIWELL STORIES

Will pay \$250 for the first 60 issues of Tip Top in nice, original condition, and \$5.00 each for many Nos. between 3 and 58. Have many early and late numbers for sale.

Guinon
Box 214 Little Rock, Ark.

NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings

Has anyone any copies of the "Maine Sportsman", a magazine published in the 1900's, on various hunters that hunted up in the Maine woods. Its size is about 9 x 12 inches, or near to it. 24 pages and published by Herbert W. Rowe, 11 Exchange St., Bangor, Maine. Anyone having any of these magazines, write to S. B. Condon, So. Penobscott, Maine.

Fred T. Singleton, gosh, we haven't heard from Fred for years, but sure glad to hear that he is still with us, too, although he hasn't been too well, either, we, the Brotherhood, wish you the very best that can be had Pard, and good luck always.

Harry B. Hamilton and W. E. Bennett feel lots better since they came out of the hospital, and so we all wish them lots of good luck, too.

Mr. Guinon writes "Let me express my appreciation for the many fine articles Mr. Leithead has written for the Roundup. The data he gives us in these articles are invaluable, and must have required a great deal of research. We are lucky to have a real dime novel enthusiast like Mr. Leithead, one who not only takes enough interest in the hobby to dig out pertinent and interesting facts, but has the ability to write about them for the benefit of his fellow-collectors."

Ray Mengar visited with Jim Martin on Nov. 19th, and had a fine time, even though before they knew it, the hands of the clock was spinning around in great shape.

Anyone wishing any Tip Tops or Work & Wins, or maybe others, let me know, the editor of this column. Guess I can help out a lot, hope so, anyway.

The other night, I missed the last bus at 11:30 p.m. and had to walk home—8 long miles—got home at 2:45 a.m. Lucky, because right after I landed at home, it started to rain.

Carl Linville says the old asthma is acting up on him again, as he had a very bad spell a short time ago. Just when a feller can enjoy a little leisure

when he gets to 60 or over, it just seems so, the cards are stacked against them, but don't worry too much, Carl, try not to worry as it gets a fellow down terribly. We are all rooting and praying for you, but try to take it as easy as you can, and if there is any snow or coal to shovel, let the other fellow do it.

James C. Morris, another old timer, has a little den he calls his very own, where he keeps his collection of old books, stamps, old coins, match covers and box tops, post cards and odd buttons, and where he can read some of his old timers, without some one bothering him, it's the life.

Ralph P. Smith remembers the old days of 1912 when he, L. C. Skinner, Ray Caldwell and others used to buy, sell, trade and what not, such as trying to get a set of the Tip Tops together and others, those were the good old days, and to think, I didn't even know what a novel was in those days, maybe I wasn't even born, until 1913 or 14 when I first became acquainted with them, even though I am 57 years old, it doesn't mean everything.

Frisco Bert Couch and his wife are back and have done quite a bit of planting, trees, shrubbery, fruit trees and what not. When everything gets ripe in years to come, we'll all have to leg it there, and sample it, then we'll know what fine farmers they are.

Well, guess the circus season is all over, as well as everything else, and old man winter is here to visit with us, once more, and oh yes, it's just 30 days more before Christmas, then New Years and so on till spring hovers around the corner once more.

So we wish all and everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year, and also all the good things that go with it, too.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- 8 George French, 7 Leo Terrace, Bloomfield, N. J. (New address)
- 100 Roy E. Swenstrom, 4308 2nd St. N. W. Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. (New address)

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK!

All year you work to provide the things you need. Now, at the end of the year, why not give yourself something you really don't have to have, but have always wanted. Your friends wouldn't know what novels to get for you, but NOW is the time to do it yourself, while they still can be obtained. Think it over.

Boys of New York #641 to 1000, loose, assembled ready to bind. Some repairs, some rubber stamping, overall good condition. Special price, \$325. If not sold by February, will break this run at either end for a reasonable quantity at \$1 per copy.

Happy Days #1 to 1563, all that were published. Good. \$600. All right—if not sold, what am I offered.

Boys Home Weekly (Caldwell file copies) Complete 1 to 40. \$40.

American Indian-Western Weekly #1 to 74. Complete. \$150.

Diamond Dick complete #1 to 762—some numbers without covers—mostly good to fine. \$700.

Brave and Bold complete #1 to 429 (Caldwell file) \$500.

Fireside Companion. Complete #1 to 1864 (Caldwell file) \$350.

Young Sports. 40 numbers. Coupons out of 6 numbers. The lot, \$30.

Illustrated World (Elverson) #1 to 32, all published. \$10.

Old Cap Collier. 100 original 10¢ edition \$200. 100-5¢ edition \$150.

The Boys Own (Richards 1873) #1 to 78. \$50.

Work and Win #1 to 673, a few fair, the rest average to good. \$350. #1 to 222 mostly good, \$135.

Tip Top Weekly. #1 to 850 complete with covers, some in bound volumes. Now or never? Think it over. Mostly good. \$750. This ought to be worth a thousand right now. Are you young enough to hold this set for ten years?

Wild West Weekly. #1 to 645. Here is Caldwell's own personal file. Best copies he could get in 30 years. This is all the original numbers; reprinting started with #646. This set of original numbers, 645 of them, \$700.

Send your want list on single copies of the above—and also on Secret Service, Young England, Boys Own Paper, Fox's School and Playground (complete novels), Illustrated Young People's Paper, Young Briton's Journal, Old and Young, etc. etc.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

Don't wait too long. The above are postpaid and subject to prior sale.

RALPH P. SMITH

Box 985

Lawrence, Mass.